

S. J. ...

1. Introduction

What are the interests of the US in the security problems, internal and external, of the emerging, underdeveloped nations; how are we to pursue them; what problems are we likely to encounter?

The operating objectives and policies of the US, as distinct from ideals or wishes, slogans or platforms, are to be sought in the pattern of specific choices we have made in the past and the choices we are inclined to make today. ~~amid the feasible alternatives we perceive in the~~ crises and decision problems we have confronted. Not all of those choices are conscious and deliberate, in the sense that we have realized we were rejecting alternatives, ^{and} foreclosing possibilities, and have seen ^{clearly} what they were; nor do they all speak clearly of intent, nor are they all consistent. But they are the best guides around to the choices we are likely to make in the near future; and they deserve our own attention as much as our opponents' and allies', if we wish to understand what we have seen as our national interests.

No area of the underdeveloped world in the last decade has provided us so many crises and choices, so rich a collection of US decisions to look at, as South Vietnam. Of course, South Vietnam is unique in so many ways, as is every such situation, that one is rightly suspicious and tentative about applying any "lessons" we might draw about means or ends from our history of experience there to other areas. That would be true even if the books were closed in South Vietnam, which is far from the case, and even if we could draw more than tentative conclusions about our experience there.

But a most important part of what we have learned so far from that experience, I think, is some humility, and some uncertainty. We have learned something of the limitations of our own traditions and understand-

ing and modes of forming and implementing coordinated policy; we have learned a little of what it is we don't yet know about influencing a government and a society that must deal at the same time with covert aggression, with demands for modernization, and with its own centrifugal tendencies and internal struggle for power. We have learned, mainly, a lot of pertinent questions. I know that is true for me; and I am sure it is true for most of those who have had to help judge and choose, to diagnose and prescribe and to ^{watch} which their diagnoses and prescriptions work themselves out in South Vietnam over the last few years. Individuals who are highly confident, at this moment, about policies that will solve the nest of problems confronting South Vietnam and US purposes, there are pretty sure to be among those whose notions have not yet been tested.

It is these lessons -- uncertainties and questions, problems and limitations and obstacles -- that are most likely to be pertinent to the problems of interest and decision we will face in other areas of the world, where covert aggression threatens to be added to the other problems of a developing nation. They are the lessons I wish to discuss with you today.

2. What are US national interests in the developing areas? Why do we care what happens there? What do we care about? How much do we care?

We like to describe our goals for the emerging nations as being just the same as those of the people of those areas: we want them to be independent, to live in peace, and to develop as they see fit. That formulation is quite true, so far as it goes; but it fails to give insight into many of the problems we encounter.

To say that our interests are identical to those of the nations and peoples we are helping flatters our sense of altruism, as it does to say that we are helping only because we have been asked. But does it really explain why we are doing as much as we are in South Vietnam? Or why the process of collaboration has not been smoother or more effective?

To answer these troublesome questions, I think we must recognize first that we have national interests in such areas that go beyond sympathy or generosity; and second, that our sense of our national interest can lead us to judgments of policy, or urgency and priority and timing, that will not always be identical to those dictated by the interests of the existing government or various factions there, as they see their interests and their alternatives. It tends to be unpleasant to raise such issues, especially in public, and it can be costly and damaging to our purposes to do so. But it is necessary, if we are to understand our own past actions and future choices, and the frictions and frustrations that are likely to arise.

As to our own national interests, ^{It is} ~~we~~ wish above all to prevent the expansion of Communist domination, throughout the underdeveloped areas, whether ^{by} open invasion or ultimatum or by the covert support of insurgency, terrorism and coups. We have specific, subordinate interests that would be threatened by takeovers in these areas -- including base and overflight rights, access to strategic water routes, trade relationships, raw materials -- but none of these compare in importance to our over-all interest in preventing the progressive subordination of much of the world's population and resources to an organized power bloc that is closed to our intercourse and hostile to our ideals and purposes.]

Why need such a prospect be in our minds at all, as we determine policy? It is, indeed, frustrating that it should be, after the efforts and resources we have invested in the past to block Communist expansion, the success we have enjoyed, the record of our commitment, and the over-all disparity of power in our favor.

Against the threat or the attempt to expand by armed invasion or attack, our panoply of traditional military power is as relevant in the protection of underdeveloped societies contiguous to the Bloc as to the protection of Western Europe. Moreover, our ability to apply that power, flexibly and promptly, in threatened areas outside Western Europe has increased very greatly in the last few years.

(Describe buildup in Army divisions, strategic reserve, mobility, air and sea transport, tac air and its mobility; transformation since opening of Laos negotiations, 1961.)

If these forces are not directly relevant to the active challenges we actually confront in the underdeveloped areas, that ~~it is~~ tribute to their effectiveness; if they did not exist, backed up by our tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, the armies of the Communist Bloc could expand Communist control much more quickly and surely than covert aggression can promise to do.

Yet there is another path to expansion, exploiting the instabilities of the developing nations, that can in the longer run be as lethal to their independence as unopposed invasion. By adding externally-supported insurgency and terrorism to the other problems of order and development these nations confront, their resistance can be weakened fatally to Communist capture of their government. That is the Communist theory; and there is much to support it.

Thus, in contrast to the case of our richer allies with established, effective governments and relatively stable societies, to safeguard the under-developed countries from armed invasion or direct threat of it is not to guarantee their national integrity or their freedom from eventual Communist domination. It is a frustrating fact that our expensive forces primarily adapted to dealing with open, large-scale aggression, powerful and indispensable as they are, do not also solve the problem of securing these nations against covert forms of attack that are "tactics of the weak," available in terms of resources and technique to expansionist nations that are themselves underdeveloped.

Both halting and deterring the course of expansion by covert means, as by overt, requires the drawing of a line; and once that line is drawn, the stakes in the fate of the particular region at issue rise very sharply for both sides. That has happened, obviously, in South Vietnam. What happens there not merely illustrates, it will very strongly influence the problems we will be facing elsewhere. Our degree of involvement there makes it a test, in the eyes of our allies, our opponents and the rest of the world, not only of our reliability as an ally, the strength of our commitment, but of our competence, our wisdom and expertise, our qualities of persistence and adaptability, and in sum, our ability to defeat the tactics of expansion the Communists have proclaimed. What is at stake is prestige, not in any fatuous sense of popularity, but in terms of our crucial ability to influence the attitudes and expectations and behavior of all those people and nations, opponents and allies and others, whose actions affect us vitally. Whatever the quality of our performance, and the special

nature of the difficulties, a simple failure, in the end, to prevent Communist domination of SVN would worsen the terms of our confrontation with the Communist Bloc in every area of the world.

Let me break out some of the components of such a failure.

(1) As a clear victory for the Communists, a major defeat for the US, it could be expected to encourage and embolden the Communists in new pressures throughout the world and to discourage the potential victims. This effect would not be limited to the Chinese Communists, or to Asia, or to underdeveloped areas, though the strength of it would vary with many factors. It would have the same sort of generalized meaning and impact as a victory for Khrushchev in the Cuban missile crisis or over Berlin.

(2) It would be a victory in particular for the Chinese Communists, which would strengthen their influence within the Communist Bloc, implying increased pressures and adventures worldwide, especially in the underdeveloped areas.

(3) It would be a victory for a specific technique, encouraging its application -- not only by the Chinese Communists and not only, indeed, by the Bloc -- against under-developed nations throughout the world. New pressures are already appearing in Thailand. The Communists have called their shot; a clear hit would go far to demoralize the next prospective target.

(4) Each of these effects might be magnified by short-run consequences of the defeat elsewhere in Southeast Asia; and a factor worsening those consequences is the strategic location of SVN within the area.

Same problems, worse conditions.

If you don't draw the line now, later.

(5) A defeat in SVN could, for a long time, affect US domestic willingness to take up this sort of challenge in areas of less than the most immediate and vital interest. This temporary loss of confidence and interest, perhaps followed later by taking up the contest under worsened conditions, is far from a certain consequence; a defeat might be seen as a challenge. But there is the possibility that a "never again" attitude might develop with respect to combating insurgency in remote areas, comparable to the "never again" attitude toward conventional limited war in Asia that followed, for many years, the frustrations of the Korean War, and which strongly influenced our willingness to intervene in Indochina in 1954 or Laos in 1961.

On the other hand...

*(all these could occur again, if we
commit our prestige...)*

It is for all these reasons of US national security that we have committed, beyond money and resources, valued advisors and American lives as we have in SVN. They are reason enough, and we may be called on to make still greater efforts. But to ~~say~~ that halting the spread of Communist expansion and protecting a clear US commitment of prestige are enough to justify the risking of American Lives is not to say that the security of SVN is only or even primarily a military problem, nor that it is a problem the US can solve alone. Both the pacification problem in SVN and, in either threatened areas, the problem of prevention of insurgency depend critically on political and economic policies and evolution.

In particular, because demands for development are almost always among the political pressures with which the government of the underdeveloped nation must come to terms if it is to achieve stability, our basic concern for the independence of these states and their cohesion and resistance to

subversion would lead us to support their development goals -- even apart from the fact that we sympathize with these goals ourselves and see them in our own broader interest. Again, we are led to a commonality of interest. Whence, then, the disagreements and the difficulties? That is the second part of my story.

"The Importance of Allies in US Strategic Planning"

A. Some earlier US requirements less relevant today:

- No reliance on foreign bases for delivery of strategic retaliation (though POLARIS bases are useful and radar warning sites highly important, along with intelligence and communications facilities).
- Less dependence on "strategic materials," given stockpiles, substitutes, alternative sources of supply.

B. Fundamental US security interest: that those parts of the world now free of Communist domination should maintain their independence.

- This interest inheres whether nation has a formal alliance with US or not.
- Even where we have given formal commitment, and even with our richest allies, the main contribution that other nations have to make, in turn, to the security of the US is the effort they invest in maintaining their own independence.
- Moreover, they can parallel us, or assist our efforts, in improving the security and maintaining the independence of other threatened nations.
- In particular, the forces of our NATO Allies are all relevant to the security of Western Europe, whether or not they are formally assigned to NATO.
- More recently, Free World Assistance to SVN is important both symbolically and materially.
- The base rights, overflight privileges, intelligence, warning and communications facilities we are granted in many parts of the world are contributions to regional security.

-- Our needs for bases for deployment, logistic support and combat support of tactical forces has grown -- more than matching the decline in our need for strategic retaliatory bases -- along with our responsibilities in the areas formerly protected by colonial powers.

Conflicts with the Developing Countries

1. We have great intentions but devote limited resources to these countries. Inevitably, then, our declaratory policies and our programs are out of step, and we tend to disappoint the aspirations and expectations of these countries.

a. What we want to influence.

(1) Foreign policies. All is subordinate to the Cold War for us, and we expect the developing countries to assume sympathetic attitudes on such issues as Chicom entrance to the UN, Article 19, and even Berlin. This expectation contradicts the notion of non-alignment, which seeks to protect against ~~abroadside~~ influence of larger powers. It may be that the Communists have not been as pushy as we have been in stressing Cold War matters. (They have not waged as vigorous a campaign to get China into the UN as we have to keep them out.)

(2) Internal security. We want them to resist subversion and fostered insurgency/by the Communists. Thus we put a great emphasis on the stability of the state, and the building of the necessary police and military forces. We prefer the state to emphasize its protective tasks, and to leave economic development to the private sector. Instability and internal disorder are deterrents to economic development, in our view. On the other hand, they see a heightened political mobilization as being more necessary.

(3) Economic development. We want them to develop carefully, with emphasis on ~~the~~ free enterprise, and the separation of economy from Communist politics and foreign policies. Furthermore, economic assistance and copying of Communist modes of organization are undesirable from our point of view. They want a total mobilization, and use of all necessary methods and

assistance to develop as fast as possible.

(4) Democratic processes and freedoms. We tend to look on our own constitution, with its checks and balances and bill of rights, as virtuous. ~~Protection~~ Our belief in the protection of the individual is in apparent contradiction at this time with their belief in mobilization and the community spirit. We have also tended to look at these political processes as separable from the problems of security and of development while they do not.

B. Whatever our differences in these issues, our influence is limited because our resources are limited.

(1) The material resources devoted to our programs and approaches are limited by Congress, by the difficulty of recruiting personnel to work in these countries, by Gold flow problems, by spreading the resources over a great number of countries. (Although it is true that not many countries get the bulk of economic and military assistance, we are concerned with the total picture; one country in a continent going Communist--Cuba or Zanzibar--is considered something of a disaster, like the onset of cancer.) Our material assistance is a tiny fraction of both their economies and their needs.

(2) We have not had much experience with these countries, having deferred until lately to the former metropole. We have little experience with their problems, little knowledge of their societies, few persons able to make the cross-cultural contacts required. For instance, in South Vietnam, we commonly converse with our counterparts in French, a language mutually alien.

2. Why we do not increase our resources, or change our approaches is due in part to our own beliefs, our own priorities, which focus on the Cold War and the developed areas, and also to some myths that prevail in domestic U.S. politics, to which we must cater, and which do govern the thoughts of many of our most influential people. Among these are:

a. The superiority of civilian over military government (or as a corollary, the superiority of bureaucratic or rational administration over politicized administration--thus a military government, which is, properly speaking, a bureaucratic government, is in some circumstances acceptable.)

b. The superiority of a parliamentary government over a single-leader government.

c. We believe in a "two-party" system, the British believe in the necessity of an "Opposition." Thus, a single-party system looks dictatorial, possibly Communist, and in any case, an easy target for Communist control.

d. Politics must be subordinate to economics. Businessmen can be unfettered, but politicians not. Politics is dirty, (We have no effective overt way of intervening in politics. We do not contribute to political organizations, and any tasks are left to covert agents.)

e. Countries should be grateful for any assistance we give them, and should show their gratitude by sympathetic foreign policies.

f. On the other hand, our relations with these countries are not supposed to be justified by altruism, but by national security. That is, all is subordinate to the Cold War.

These points have been made so often that it is hard to believe there is any uncertainty about the Government's ^{answer to} ~~position on~~ this question. The fact that the question continues to be raised indicates that the critics cannot accept the answer as sufficient; they cannot conceive of the stakes I have mentioned as being great enough to justify the ^{overall magnitude} ~~scale~~ of effort we are making in South Vietnam, ~~quite apart from the appropriateness of our efforts.~~ That is, in the end, a matter of judgment; I can only say that in my own opinion, these stakes are very high indeed. ~~Importantly, I have the feeling that~~ ^{Where this is a difference of} ~~Where this is a difference of~~ ^{these may of those who differ} ~~opinion,~~ ^{in particular} I have the feeling that ~~critics most often tend to ignore the reality~~ ^{and the significance of the factor of commitment,} the commitment of the US Government to the achievement of the ^{They seem to deny the reality or the significance of} ~~objectives I have described,~~ as that commitment has evolved over the last decade and as ~~it~~ that commitment is seen from the three perspectives of the South Vietnamese, ~~the~~ of the Communist Bloc and ^{especially} ~~especially~~ Communist China, ^{in particular,} and of all these nations in the world who regard their security as dependent upon any form of US guarantee.

~~Several speakers at the National Teach-in~~
~~Where some critics simply pay no attention to the commitment we have forged~~
~~by our words, by our~~ ^{aid, our advice,} ~~Several speakers at the National Teach-in in May~~
~~took some pains to~~ ^{they} describe our commitment to South Vietnam as something quite artificial, fancied and insubstantial, deserving no weight in our present policy-making. That is not the way that Communist China, ^{for one,} sees the stakes, and on this point I think we must see eye to eye with the Chicom: the US Government's commitment to the independence of South Vietnam is real, it is truly being tested-- by the actions of North Vietnam with the support and encouragement of Communist China--and ~~the outcome of that test is~~ ^{indeed} ~~truly~~ one of the largest stakes at issue.

(but slow deterioration likely to resume.)

The situation: The situation is temporarily stalemated, ~~It is not likely~~ US air strikes in NVN and SVN and deployment of US ground troops have ~~not~~ improved the "balance of morale"--resigning the DRV and the VC to ~~prospects of a~~ long struggle, ^{with risks of} and confronting the DRV and the Chicom with the possibilities of escalation, while convincing the SVNese of US commitment--but this effect may soon wear off, without further escalation. In the lull, Quat strengthened his position over the military, yet may have to turn back to them for support against opposition and demonstrations by the militant Catholics, and perhaps segments of the sects, the Southerners and labor. So the government remains preoccupied by Saigon internal politics, while proposed economic/political programs to broaden support languish. If the VC risk their unused main force strength, ~~along with~~ alongside PAVN regular units, in major actions, they might make some powerful psychological gains, at risk of some major military defeats (might try for: holding district/provincial capital; ~~depleting~~ exhausting ARVN reserves by widely-separate attacks, inflicting serious ARVN defeats; proclaiming and defending Liberated Zone in I and II Corps areas; spectacles like attack in force on Bien Hoa). VC likely to continue to strengthen their political control ~~of~~ in countryside by steady political action and organization, backed by terrorism and steady guerrilla action.

VC Courses

1. Big monsoon offensive: with support of PAVN units
 - a. Take district/province capital, hold and defend (cause US to inflict great casualties in retaking).
 - b. Attacks/ambushes in widely-separated areas; strain ARVN reserves. Series of ARVN defeats.
 - c. Liberate zone in I and II Corps.
 - d. Pressure on Saigon; accelerate drive in Hop Tac area, demonstrate failure of Hop Tac.
 - e. Spectaculars: e.g., big attack on Bien Hoa, bit assassinations.
2. Keep steady pressure on, at present levels; ambushes/attacks only under favorable conditions; eat away at ARVN/SVN morale; subversion in cities; increase political control in countryside.

SVN Situation:

a. In countryside:

1. VC extending their control through political action and organization, while maintaining steady pressure by terrorism and military action.
2. Government programs to improve political support in countryside bogged down; little energy in pursuing.

b. In cities:

1. Quat has improved his predominance over armed forces--with dissolution of AFC, downgrading of Minh--but has gained enmity of extremist northern Catholics, perhaps segments of southern Catholics, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Southerners in general; may have to turn to military for support.
2. May face demonstrations from above; opposition from Buu and CTV;
3. Still focused on internal politics, rather than programs to win broader support, or pursue war.

^{clearly}
(emphasized this factor of history)
President Johnson ~~addressed this point clearly~~ in his remarks accompanying military operations in
his message to Congress on May 4, requesting additional appropriations for
South Vietnam:

"There are some who sincerely and genuinely feel we ought to be out of Southeast Asia altogether and retire to our own shores, that we really have no great interest there, and that we ought to pull out.

That argument would have had much more force if we had not concluded otherwise as a policy of the Congress and had not entered into treaties that bound us there."

As the President said in his accompanying message:

"Make no mistake about it. The aim in Viet-Nam is not simply the conquest of the South, tragic as that would be. It is to show that American commitment is worthless." ~~Once that is done, the goal is to show that the result is a greater expansion and a greater commitment.~~

To write off the ~~significance of such a demonstration~~ impact of ~~that~~ such a demonstration upon potential aggressors and their potential victims is to expunge the most important lessons to be learned from the history of the past third of a century.